DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 154 607 FL 009 436

TITLE	Program No. 111: Foreign Languages. Options in Education Transcript.
INSTITUTION	George Washington Univ., Washington, D.C. Inst. for Educational Leadership.; National Public Radio, Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	24 Feb 78
NOTE	20p.
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	College Language Programs; Conversational Language Courses; Declining Enrollment; Elementary Secondary Education; *Enrollment Trends; Fles; Higher Education; Immersion Programs; *Language Enrollment; *Language Instruction; *Language Programs; Language Teachers; Latin; *Modern Language Curriculum; Relevance (Education); *Second Language Learning; Student Attitudes; Student Interests; Student Needs; Teaching Methods
IDENTIFIERS	Value of Language Study

ABSTRACT

A transcript is provided of a radio program broadcast February 24, 1978, on the state of foreign language education. The participants in the discussion were leaders in the field, teachers and students from many parts of the United States and from all educational levels. The subjects covered are: some problems facing foreign language programs; the value of learning a foreign language; optimum age for learning a foreign language; Latin; new teaching methods for foreign language programs; Middlebury College's language program; speaking French in an elementary school; the state of foreign languages in Los Angeles public schools; how the study of foreign languages can help the education process; foreign languages study in Seattle; and the question of a brighter future for foreign languages. The general concerns expressed in the interviews involve enrollment trends, the relevance and value of foreign language learning, and student needs and interests. (AMH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED154607

FL

LISTEN: let your ear keep an eye on the schools!

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

John Merrow
Nat'l Public Radio

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

FL009436

Options in Education

TRANSCRIPT:

[redacted]

A co-production of
National Public Radio & the
Institute for Educational Leadership of the George Washington University

YOU ARE ENCOURAGED TO WRITE TO US--TO MAKE COMMENT, EXPRESS OPINION, RAISE QUESTIONS. PLEASE NOTE ALSO, THAT YOU ARE WELCOME TO REPRINT MATERIAL CONTAINED IN THIS TRANSCRIPT FOR NON-PROFIT USE. OPTIONS IN EDUCATION ALWAYS APPRECIATES A CREDIT LINE.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	1-2
SOME PROBLEMS FACING FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROGRAMS - Rina Russini, Principal of Murray High School, St. Paul, Minnesota; and Murray High School foreign language students	2-3
THE VALUE OF LEARNING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE - Richard Brod, Director of foreign language programs at the Modern Language Association	3-4
OPTIMUM AGE FOR LEARNING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE - Lorraine Strausheim, President of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages	4-5
LATIN IS STILL AROUND - Charles Ellis, Teacher at Longstreth Elementary School in Philadelphia; Dr. Rudy Macsiantonio, Curriculum Specialist for the Philadelphia school district; and Latin students from Longstreth Elementary School	5-6
NEW TEACHING METHODS FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROGRAMS - Gladys Lipton, a foreign language coordinator in Maryland; Richard Brod of the Modern Language Association	7-8
MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE'S LANGUAGE PROGRAM - Roger Peel, Director of the language program; Middlebury college students	8-9
SPEAKING FRENCH IN AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - Students from Four Corners Elementary School in Silver Spring, Maryland; Gabriel Jacobs, Principal of Four Corners	9-10
THE STATE OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN LOS ANGELES PUBLIC SCHOOLS - Paul Harper, language teacher; Maureen Watson, French teacher; Dr. Jules Mandel, Instructional Specialist	11-12
HOW THE STUDY OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES CAN HELP THE EDUCATION PROCESS - Gladys Lipton, a foreign language coordinator in Maryland; Lorraine Strausheim, President of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages; Richard Brod of the Modern Language Association	12-13
FOREIGN LANGUAGES: AN ENDANGERED SPECIES IN SEATTLE - Harry Reinhert, President of the Washington Association of Foreign Language Teachers; Art Glomady of the House Education Committee; Senator Jim McDermit, Senate Education Committee Chairman	13-14
A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGES? - Dr. Jean Charles Senioray, Chairman of Foreign Languages and Literatures at Washington State University; WSU student	14-15
CONCLUSION	15-16

"Copyright © 1978 for National Public Radio and the Institute for Educational Leadership"

"FOREIGN LANGUAGES"

CHILD: A...

CHILD: B...

WOMAN: C....

MAN: D...

WOMAN: H...

MAN: I...

MAN: J...

CHILD: K...

MAN: L...

TEENAGER: M...

WOMAN: N...

WOMAN: O...

WOMAN: P...

MERROW: T-I-O-P -- options -- OPTIONS IN EDUCATION. From the ABC's of pre-school to the alphabet soup of government programs, this is OPTIONS IN EDUCATION.

* * *

TEACHER: This table. Ubi est Roma?

STUDENTS: Roma est in Italia.

TEACHER: This table here. Ubi est Roma?

STUDENTS: Roma est in Italia.

TEACHER: Everybody. Ubi est Roma?

STUDENTS: Roma est in Italia.

MERROW: That's a Latin class in Philadelphia.

BLAIR: In an elementary school.

MERROW: In the inner city.

BLAIR: Sound unusual? It is, very unusual. I'm Wendy Blair.

MERROW: I'm John Merrow, and come to think of it, studying a foreign language -- Latin, Russian, German, Italian -- just isn't all that common in any school. Enrollments in language classes have been declining for ten years in secondary school and in college.

BLAIR: And as for elementary school, well, there's not much to decline from. That Philadelphia school is a rare exception, and we'll hear more about it later in the program.

MERROW: As OPTIONS IN EDUCATION looks at foreign languages in our schools and colleges.

* * *

BROD: The loss on the part of French, German, Russian and Latin means, apparently, that students are not as interested, not interested in language for the old traditional reasons, for let's say scholarly and cultural reasons. They're more interested in languages that have some immediate practical value;

that they can literally hear on the streets around them, as is the case for Spanish.

STRAUSHEIM: I've had any number of, of business people who will say to me: "Yes, if I have two candidates for a job, with equal abilities in the skills I need, whether it's secretarial skills, or scientific skills, or so on, if one person has a knowledge of a foreign language, it makes that person far more valuable and the salary goes up because of that specific knowledge.

JACOBS: One of the things that I have been reading in the research is that adults are just as capable of learning foreign languages. They may have some limitations in some ways, and some advantages in other ways. Why do it with children? I'm an elementary school principal; this is my business. We started here because parents wanted a foreign language program, and that's why we're doing it with children.

BROD: Now there has been a shift in the choice of languages. Unfortunately, during the six-year period that I've mentioned, the big loser was French, which lost almost 35% of its enrollments during that period; German lost 30, and Russian lost 20%. And, unfortunately, these languages are still not regaining very much of the strength they lost.

* * *

BLAIR: As those people testify, foreign languages in our schools are having a rough time. They're fighting a battle and losing it so far, against courses that are more "relevant."

MERROW: And language courses, departments and teachers are losing the battle of the budget.

BLAIR: Take St. Paul, Minnesota, where the school board has adopted the objective of offering three modern languages in all junior high and high schools.

MERROW: But, and it's a big but, budget problems and declining enrollments are getting in the way. Three junior high schools in St. Paul offer no foreign languages at all. The remaining seven junior highs and high schools offer two,or perhaps three, foreign languages.

BLAIR: St. Paul is a long way from meeting its objective.

MERROW: But it's trying, as Rachel Kranz of member station KUOM reports.

SOME PROBLEMS FACING FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROGRAMS

KRANZ: Part of the reason for the gap between board objective and school practice is another board decision that was made three years ago. When St. Paul was facing a severe budgetary crisis, the board decided to cut all teachers who didn't have tenure. Schools juggled their staff loads to keep history and English classes running. But language programs were among those that had to go. In many schools, those language teachers haven't been replaced. So even if there is student interest, teachers aren't there to offer the classes.

In addition, St. Paul, like many districts, has been facing a huge decline in enrollment. The board has a policy that any class attracting less than 20 students should be dropped, which led to the gradual elimination of Latin throughout the late '60 s and early '70 s.

Philosophies on the value of taking a language vary throughout the school system. Howard Hathaway, supervisor of world languages and cultures for the district,says that very little purpose is served by Latin that can't be met by another, more useable language. Rina Russini, the Principal of Murray High School in St. Paul, and a 20-year veteran of the teaching profession, says that he rather regrets the declining interest in Latin, and in foreign languages in general. But he says that once colleges dropped the language requirement, high school students lost interest.

RUSSINI: Language is not a requirement for entry into college, as it was in many cases. Certain colleges, you could not get in, certain liberal arts institutions, without foreign language. That's no longer true. When they dropped the language requirement, they dropped the need for certain students in high school to take the language. And I think that's the main reason,right now, that languages have shown a decrease.

KRANZ: Does that bother you as a, as an educator, that, that students aren't interest in learning for its own sake; they're only interested in taking what they need to get into college?

RUSSINI: Well, of course, that's a philosophical point we could talk a long, long time. Let's recognize human nature the way it is, and accept it. Yes, it does bother me. I can't say that in my own case I've always taken things...learned things just for the sake of learning them, and that I was utilitarian in my design. So, I expect that from other human beings too. That's the way human beings are.

KRANZ: Neither Russini nor Hathaway agree that student interest in languages is actually declining. Both say that it's difficult to tell what represents loss of interest, what represents staff or budget problems, and what represents simply declining enrollment.

STUDENT: I'm in French III, and what we're mainly doing is reading French stories, spy, spy stories, and learning how to really speak. And when, if we do go to France, learn how to talk and how we should greet people, and we're... we sometimes learn how to order different kinds of foods, and things. It's fun. I like that. I'm able to speak another language besides English. If someday I go to France, I'd, I'd like to be able to speak it, and not just have other people speaking for me.

STUDENT: Well, I started out in German and I didn't like that. And I have some, like ancestors that...French-Canadian and English, and, well, whatever, French. And so I thought I'd like to learn how to speak it. And say, if I go over to France, or Paris, I want to know how to...what I'm doing over there. (laughs)

KRANZ: Would you like to be taking another language that the school doesn't offer?

STUDENT: I'd like to be taking like Swedish or Norwegian, cause that's what I am -- Swedish. So, I'd like to take that 'cause all my relatives, a lot of them speak Swedish.

STUDENT: If it wasn't French, I think I might like to take Latin. I... because in my elementary school, there was a Latin teacher we had there once before. He taught us a little bit, but after that, I haven't saw anymore. And so I'd like to take up Latin if it is at all possible.

KRANZ: Does it make you angry that they aren't offering Latin, and that they aren't offering Swedish.

STUDENT: Well, sort of, that they don't have enough language courses to take, and that you don't have that many. We were lucky that we do have French.

STUDENT: Oh yeah, it does make mad, but I understand why we can't have it: because our school isn't big enough. But French, German is...having both of those is enough.

KRANZ: Language students at St. Paul's Murray High School. Hathaway says that once St. Paul schools are all offering three languages, the district could then make a better assessment of just what languages students want and why. For National Public Radio's OPTIONS IN EDUCATION, I'm Rachel Kranz at station KUOM, Minneapolis.

MERROW: Money's not the only problem. In the '60 s, students demanded more relevance in curricula, and more freedom to choose their courses. Many colleges developed new courses, and abandoned language requirements. And in the last few years, high schools have done the same thing.

BLAIR: The thinking is that languages are no longer necessary to get into college. So, high schools don't have to require them, or offer as many anyway.

MERROW: For language people, things have gotten so bad that the good news is that the decline may be slowing down.

THE VALUE OF LEARNING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

BROD: Enrollments in foreign languages in the United States reached a peak in the late '60 s, and they've been on the decline ever since. So, for

example, in the, what we call the "Big Five Lanaguages" which are French, German, Italian, Russian and Spanish at the college level, we had a loss of nearly 20% between 1968 and 1974. Now this year, I'm doing a new survey, and it looks as though we've bottomed out, in the sense that on the basis of our samples, we have, we're experiencing a loss of less than 1%.

BLAIR: That's Richard Brod, Director of foreign language programs for the Modern Language Association. Brod talked with reporter Dan Mack in New York City about the changes in foreign language study, and sounded a familiar theme: studying a foreign language is good for you.

BROD: We think, we feel that the principal values of language study continue to be the opening up of the mind. There was a time when one said Latin gave you discipline, or Latin taught you how to think, and so on. That may or may not be true. It would be hard to define today. But we do have adequate evidence that the study of either an ancient language like Latin, or a modern language has a decided impact upon one's perception and use of English, and upon one's openness and recognition of what language is, in the mind, and what it is as a human, as a human construct. Not necessarily consciously: that is to say, not everyone who studies a second language will be able to draw conclusions about the nature of language simply by having done so. But he or she can certainly learn to see fairly quickly that the way we do things in English is not the only way. He or she can learn to see quickly that a, a language is an expression of culture, and is an expression of a, a set of preferences and values: that there are all kinds of reflections of what a culture is, of what a value system is, of what differing modes of thought, all of which -- if you understand it correctly -- all of...you begin to realize that all of them are equally valid.

We, the other values of language study are more practical, needless to say, such as the capacity to communicate with specific persons in specific situations.

BLAIR: Richard Brod of the Modern Language Association in New York City, talking with reporter Dan Mack.

MERROW: Brod is a strong defender of foreign languages, and he's not the only one. Almost everyone our reporters talked with encouraged, supported, or otherwise argued for the study of some language in addition to English.

BLAIR: In most other countries, we're told, kids routinely learn one or two other languages besides their native tongue.

MERROW: In Europe, for instance, the study of foreign languages is highly valued as a discipline; but it's also something of a necessity in business and travel, for instance.

BLAIR: Only in America is monolingualism acc pted so matter of factly.

MERROW: Reporter Margaret Joseph talked about the study of language and particularly the question of when it's best to start learning one with Lorraine Strausheim, President of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages.

OPTIMUM AGE FOR LEARNING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

JOSEPH: What about the optimum age to study a foreign language? This is the old argument that the younger you are, the easier it comes.

STRAUSHEIM: Well, that, that's another half-truth, you know. The oral language, the pronunciation, intonation, the sound system, speaking the language does come more readily for the very young student, the younger...the third grader, the fourth grader, and the rest. Some of the grammatical concepts that are necessary, and the rest, take an older learner, so that any age group can learn a language, and any age group has advantages and disadvantages. The older learner is more inhibited sound-wise.

JOSEPH: For college bound students, how much of one language should they have?

STRAUSHEIM: Well, basically I think any student...let's go back again to the idea of any student. I think any student, who develops enough skill that he can build on in the future needs three years of a language, at least, if we're going to talk about that. Ideally, they should have longer. Now, one

of the problems that's presented with the extended sequence, the so-called "long sequence," is that it's very difficult for a seventh or an eighth grader to sign up for French or Spanish and commit himself to four or five, and in some school systems, nine years. You know, he doesn't know what he's going to be interested in next week, much less three or four years down the road. And that's why a great number of schools in the exploratory programs, particularly in middle schools, are giving students tastes of languages, so that they can study the one that sounds right to them; that they can say easily, or they like to deal with.

JOSEPH: From a practical standpoint, which languages would you recommend for people going into the various kinds of careers: medicine, law, engineering?

STRAUSHEIM: Well, if we're going to be desperately honest, we don't like to select among languages, for a variety of reasons. There is a folk mythology that says that this language is harder than that language; that this language is better than this language, or whatever. And, and by and large, most of that is pure mythology. From another standpoint, however, the person who wishes to use a language in a career today, as I said, probably would be well served to study the languages the Indiana businesses identified: French,German and Spanish. Those seem to be languages that will help them deal with that.

JOSEPH: Now that's an interesting comment coming from a Latin teacher, which you are. (Laughter)

STRAUSHEIM: Well, I am a Latin teacher. However, I think that we have to be sort of sane about Latin in, in a lot of ways, in that years ago, we used to claim a lot of advantages from the study of Latin that may or may not have been true. Some of them probably happened simply because we were sensitized to language through some contrastive studies we did.

JOSEPH: Are you telling me that all the good things I thought I got out of my three years of Latin I really didn't get?

STRAUSHEIM: No, I'm saying if you got them, you could also have gotten them from a Spanish course, a Russian course, or a French course equally well taught.

MERROW: Lorraine Strausheim, President of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, talking with reporter Margaret Joseph, station WFIU, Bloomington, Indiana.

BLAIR: And don't knock Latin, at least don't knock it in Philadelphia, where inner-city kids are learning that supposedly dead language.

MERROW: Learning it and loving it. Liane Hansen reports.

LATIN IS STILL AROUND

HANSEN: What was the song that, that you were singing?

TEACHER: Rome is burning, and the kids love it. And we do gestures to it, and we...when it's burning, they're looking out over the city. And they're throwing water on the fire, and the flames are burning, and the fire engine is ringing. Of course, no fire engine, but we let the kids believe that there's a fire engine. So they get immediate....

HANSEN: Recognition.

TEACHER: ...recognition of what's going on.

HANSEN: Charles Ellis teaches Latin to the third and fourth grades at Longstreth Elementary School. Ellis is one of approximately 30 teachers who travel to elementary schools for 20 minutes a day, three times a week, to teach Latin. He's part of a program designed for the Philadelphia school district by Dr. Rudy Macsiantonio.

MACSIANTONIO: At first, when people hear about Latin being taught in inner-city schools, their reaction is, "Well, maybe you're crazy." (Laughs) Actually, though, I think that after people become familiar with what the program is all about, they become much more receptive to it, and very supportive of it.

What we're trying to do in the program is to build the English vocabulary of, of...and the reading skills of the children through Latin roots. For example, when a child learns the Latin word aqua, well, which means water, he gets the various English derivatives that come from that: aquatics, aquarium, aquarama, aquamarine, aquarius, and so forth. And this is a very efficient and effective way of building the vocabulary and reading skills of pupils.

HANSEN: Dr. Macsiantonio, a curriculum specialist for the Philadelphia school district, first proposed the program while he was teaching Latin at South Philadelphia High School. Now, over 9,000 students in approximately 80 elementary schools are benefiting from the study of Latin.

MACSIANTONIO: We have test results that show that pupils in the Latin program advanced one full year in their standardized vocabulary and reading test scores, as compared to control groups: that is, kids of similar background and ability who didn't have the Latin program. This is a very meaningful statistic, particularly in the context of urban education, where so much fails. Here we're succeeding. We're teaching kids to read; we're getting kids to be literate and cultured.

HANSEN: The program was initially funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities on the condition that the school district would later pick up the program in its operating budget. That is the case now, but during the school financial crisis last summer, the district cut the Latin program's funds by 40%. As a result, Latin was dropped from many elementary schools, and from almost all junior high schools. Enrollment dropped from 14,000 students to 9,000, and no one knows what will happen this year.

MACSIANTONIO: It sounds like an incredible thing. That a program that had proven its success would be cut back this way and so drastically. But there are all kinds of political machinations involved in, in this, and maybe I shouldn't be saying this on the radio. (Laughs) I'll probably get fired, but, it, it's the truth. It's a sad thing for someone like myself who works at the school district administration building to see how political appointments are retained, and yet instructional programs to kids are, are cut back. They hurt kids who are most in need of help. And yet they were done, I think, in a very cavalier fashion, and without recognition being given of the tremendous effectiveness of the Latin program in making kids literate and cultured. Of course, it's been said that perhaps there are people around who really don't want to see inner-city kids succeed, who don't want to make kids literate or cultured, and perhaps that's the reason that we see this kind of unconscionable cutback in, in a proven and successful program.

STUDENT: I like Latin because my mother asks me what I do in school, and I have something extra I can say.

STUDENT: I like Latin because my brother takes Latin lessons too. And when we get home, me and my brother talks in Latin, and my sister don't know what we talking about.

HANSEN: Why do you like Latin so much?

STUDENT: Well, I like Latin because it's fun, and you can enjoy it. And when I grow up, I might become a Latin teacher, and teach some of the people, so when they go to Rome, they can learn a lot of things, and they can, you know, say things. If they say something, they won't look at them like, like they're crazy. Like I seen on the program where a person was different language and they didn't know what he was talking about.

HANSEN: So this will give you the opportunity to talk to some people in their own language, but I thought that people don't speak Latin anymore. I thought they spoke it 2,000 years ago.

STUDENT: Well, they might change. They be changing, and they want to be like they was a long time ago, like I want to know how things...I'm going to start studying history, and I'm going to start doing things, and go into research.

STUDENT: If you're a pharmacist, or something, they teach...you have to read Latin and stuff like that.

STUDENT: It's fun learning Latin.

MERROW: That report for OPTIONS IN EDUCATION from Liane Hansen, station

WLHY, Philadelphia.

BLAIR: That's a rare case mind you: Latin in elementary school. In fact, efforts to start lots of elementary school language programs haven't worked out well.

MERROW: In the '50 s and the '60 s, there was a concerted push by the Modern Language Association, and other language advocate groups, to get more foreign languages in elementary schools. The National Defense Education Act, and some private foundations, provided money, and schools around the country got involved. But the effort bombed.

BLAIR: While there were a few critics of the idea, the practical daily problems involved stymied the push. Teachers with no language training were asked to go in and teach French, for instance. Some teachers even had to learn the night before what they were supposed to teach the next day.

MERROW: Besides untrained teachers, course materials were often dull...

BLAIR: ...and repeated year after year.

MERROW: But language is taught differently these days. It's looser and more fun, or so our reporters tell us.

BLAIR: David Selvin talked with Gladys Lipton, a foreign language coordinator in Maryland, about today's teaching methods.

NEW TEACHING METHODS FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROGRAMS

LIPTON: We couldn't continue to teach in a very grammar-oriented translation method, as we used to, and still offer it to all kinds of different students. Now, it's a very "with it" approach. And yet, it is a discipline; it's an academic discipline. But, for example, if you walk into a classroom these days, you may see some dialogue situations with students talking to one another -- a great deal of emphasis on speaking the language -- and speaking the language on the basis of what students want to say. It's no longer "La plume de ma tante sur le table de mon oncle." We really talk about football scores, a recent boxing match--who did you think was going to win?-- all kinds of sports brought in, movie stars, rock personalities. All of this forms the basis of teaching the grammatical structure and the lexical items of the language. And this then makes it very appealing to students.

MERROW: Gladys Lipton, a foreign language coordinator in Anne Arundel County, Maryland, talking with David Selvin.

TEACHER: Ubi est Roma?

STUDENTS: Roma est in Italia?

TEACHER: This table here. Ubi est Roma?

STUDENTS: Roma est...

BLAIR: According to Richard Brod of the Modern Language Association, college level teaching, and the colleges' attitude toward languages, both have changed for the better. Dan Mack talked with Brod.

RICHARD BROD

BROD: The primary shift has been toward the teaching of culture and civilization in the broadest possible sense, more than the teaching of literature. In the past, our language and lit departments were simply that. They didn't pay too much attention to what was going on in contemporary France We now have access to visual media, and to information about France, and to recent contacts and daily news reports from France and so on. We're able to teach the contemporary civilization, and some of the historical background civilization, in ways that we weren't before. So we, we are interested in teaching that, and we find that our students are usually interested in learning it.

As part of that, I see the vocational emphasis moving in as a, as a, as a part of civilization; because you learn about the French society in total, you need to learn certain institutional differences: the way French business is conducted; the way French people deal with one another in social situations, and in formal business situations, and so on, French law, French

social structures, and all of that. So that in learning about France, one is learning things that could have application to one's practical occupational goals, or simply to one's desire to learn about France in a very serious down-to-earth, immediate way, rather than merely the broad sense of, of the sweep of French history, and the beauty of French literature, all of which are still there, and all of which are still teachable in our departments. In other words, language is no longer a hothouse product. We're not teaching modern languages they way we would teach Greek. We're teaching modern languages for instant and direct communication with our contemporaries in those countries.

BLAIR: Richard Brod of the Modern Language Association, talking with Dan Mack in New York City.

MERROW: He described new courses and new approaches, but in college level foreign language training, there's one constant: a success story that began in 1915, and is going strong. Art Silverman reports on Middlebury College's language program. He talked with the Director, Roger Peel.

MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE'S LANGUAGE PROGRAM

PEEL: We devote the entire summer to foreign languages; whereas these days, many institutions have summer programs of one kind or another which tend to be like the program in session during the rest of the academic year. Here, on this particular campus, we devote the entire facility to, to foreign languages.

SILVERMAN: The school's nationally known summer program begins with a student signing a pledge to speak only the new language while at the school and in the community. All extracurricular activities during the summer are carried on in French, Russian, and even Chinese. Only to communicate with the townspeople do the Middlebury Students break their pledge.

PEEL: For many adult Americans, a foreign language represents a kind of punishment; that in their educational experience, they remember having to study a foreign language, having to live with the ordeal of this requirement. What we're trying to do in stating a new case for foreign languages is to change, in a sense, the climate, and to change the attitude.

SILVERMAN: Why did I hate my language courses? Was it the teachers, the methods they followed, or was I just plain resisting it for some other reason?

PEEL: A lot of people who teach foreign languages would not like what I would say, but I think in many cases it's because the foreign languages had been taught not necessarily badly, but taught in a very unimaginative way. You can hear countless examples of people who studied five years of French, and went to France and couldn't manage. There are people who have... going into government service, who take the standard tests that are given by the, by the government, who can't pass the basic qualifications.

SILVERMAN: Does it feel like you're on the spot when you're called upon to answer a question and dinner conversation, or is it pretty relaxed feeling.

STUDENT: No, I'm used to it now. When I first started, it was terrible. (Laughs) We had to force ourselves to come here. But it was...after about the third or fourth time, it wasn't bad at all.

STUDENT: There is once a year, the language programs get to plan a menu completely, which they hold in the major dining hall, and that will be Russian evening. And they'll have a totally Russian meal. But here, students eat...it's the one cafeteria on campus where the students are served, and all of the waiters and waitresses address the students in the given language. And so they can come here for total submersion experience in language every afternoon, and also many of the languages do it in the evening for dinner, and many of them do it for breakfast also.

SILVERMAN: Do your conversations go as deep now at the level you're at as an English conversation might, if English is your...

STUDENT: Well, this is my first year of French, so it's not quite at that level. But I also sit at the Italian and Spanish table, or I sit here occasionally, and from what I hear people around me, I pick up vocabulary. And not only that, but it forces me to use what little vocabulary I have. And professors join in, so they're understanding, and they realize that they can't... that you can't speak as well as other people.

STUDENT: I've been taking Spanish since seventh grade, and, so this is my eighth year studying it, I guess. And the comparison...there's no comparison to high school courses.

BLAIR: That report for OPTIONS IN EDUCATION from Art Silverman of station WVPA, Windsor, Vermont.

MERROW: The immersion approach that Middlebury uses in the summer is used in other places as well.

* * *

SPEAKING FRENCH IN AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

SELVIN: How do people react to you when they understand that you speak French?

STUDENT: On toujours dit: "Ah, vous parlez Français!" They always say: "You, you speak French!"

SELVIN: What do you think of that? What do you think of learning French. I mean, you sound very good. You sound like you could be French.

STUDENT: It's not really any different. It's just a different language.

SELVIN: Do you find that it helps you with anything? Do you think maybe sometime later on in your life it'll help you?

STUDENT: Oui. Yeah.

SELVIN: How?

STUDENT: Pour avoir un devoir. To have a job, you know.

* * *

JACOBS: There's not much difference, in many ways, between an immersion classroom, and any other classroom, in the sense of what happens. The child, depending on his age, is doing different levels of...different levels of difficulty of work. The first, second grade child is doing, obviously, a simpler form of mathematics; he's doing beginning reading with phonics and with language experience and so on, except that it's all in French. But when you go into an immersion classroom here, much of it will, if you can forget the fact that it's being done in another language, will seem as if it's any other classroom. The children are doing their school work for appropriate to whatever their age is and their ability.

* * *

MERROW: That's Gabriel Jacobs, Principal of the Four Corners School, a public elementary school in Silver Spring, Maryland, a suburb of Washington, D.C. What you heard was not a French class, but a reading class conducted in French. One-third of the students at Four Corners are in the immersion program, and all of their classes are conducted in French--everything except phys ed, music and library skills. The program started four years ago, and enrollment has grown steadily as more and more parents are choosing to send their kids there. Reporter David Selvin spent the day at Four Corners, talking with students and Principal Gabriel Jacobs about the "immersion" program.

SELVIN: When you say immersion, you're not kidding. As I walked in, I noticed everything's bilingual, all the signs, even the name of the school is in French and English. Why bilingual? Why, why immersion even?

JACOBS: Foreign language teaching, as we know it in the public schools in this country, leaves most people with the feeling that they're inadequate to learning a foreign language. The emphasis of most foreign language teaching is on the use, on the teaching of language as an entity in itself. And this is dull. Most of us learn languages, whether they're our own languages or other languages because we have a need to know them. In this program, we have come to agreement with parents to put the child in a position where the child has no choice.

STUDENT: It's not really them who decided. I...My mother asked me if I wanted to, and she said "Yes", and I said "Yes", so I'm in it.

SELVIN: And why did you say yes?

STUDENT: I just liked ...

SELVIN: This is an unusual program, I think, for many reasons; first of all it's immersion; secondly, it's public schools; thirdly, it...we're speaking about relatively young children. And it's unusual, I think, because somebody has made a decision that teaching a foreign language, whether immersion or whatever method, is not really all that important. You've obviously decided the opposite of that. Why?

JACOBS: I think that one, one comes to understand one's own culture and knows one's own country better by having a good view outside of it, through the study of another culture. I think we become...when we become substantively fluent in foreign languages, and knowing other cultures, we become better Americans because we have a way of comparing. There are concepts in other languages that, obviously, do not go from language to language and culture to culture. A good example in the French language would be the word metier. You could give a one sentence definition of metier, and you could not describe what it means in French, because it's really a cultural thing. Many people doing jobs that we would not consider occupations or professions, in the French sense of the word metier, consider that a dignified occupation. This reflects a view of a dignity of human beings that, I think, is something very important for us to learn from the French culture, as one specific example.

STUDENT: I think we're really lucky to have this advantage, cause we're kids, and it's a lot easier for us to learn younger, than when we're older.

* * *

BLAIR: That report on the Four Corners Elementary School was prepared for OPTIONS IN EDUCATION by David Selvin.

MERROW: You know Wendy, that's two remarkable elementary school programs -- Philadelphia and Silver Spring. I'm afraid we may be giving our listeners the wrong idea.

BLAIR: That's right. Those are exceptional programs. But remember, there just aren't very many elementary school foreign language programs of any kind -- good, bad, or indifferent.

MERROW: High schools haven't been faring especially well either. Ten years ago, 27% of all high school students took a foreign language. Today, the figure is under 20%.

BLAIR: Today, only 4 million secondary school students are taking foreign languages. There are many reasons for this decline in high school enrollment, the main one being no more college foreign language requirements; and, of course, money's a problem as we've heard, and so are teaching methods.

MERROW: Even though language teachers are now interested in innovative methods and programs, many state language supervisors feel that students have an image of language study as being boring, effeminate, or silly.

BLAIR: But not all languages have faired equally poorly in the last few years. French and Latin have declined the most; German and Russian have also lost popularity.

MERROW: But in Virginia, Colorado, Wisconsin, California, and in most other states, Spanish is doing very well. Apparently students perceive it as a practical language. In many areas of the country, particularly the Southwest, it helps in getting jobs.

BLAIR: In the few places where French is still popular -- New Hampshire and Louisiana, for instance -- there are strong ethnic ties to French Canada and France.

MERROW: And state foreign language supervisors believe that where enrollment is rising, it's because teachers have started to sell foreign languages with innovative teaching methods, study abroad, and so forth.

BLAIR: Those teachers who can sell their programs to students have job security, naturally.

MERROW: And job security is a scarce commodity for foreign language teachers.

BLAIR: In 1966, 6½% of all public school teachers taught foreign languages.

MERROW: Today, it's 4.2%.

BLAIR: Bill Blackton has a report on the foreign language situation in the Los Angeles public schools. California says junior and senior high schools have to offer foreign languages, but Los Angeles doesn't make anybody take them to graduate. L.A. schools do offer ten languages, but there are problems. Here's Blackton's report.

THE STATE OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN LOS ANGELES PUBLIC SCHOOLS

BLACKTON: Paul Harper teaches French and Spanish, and he's also accredited to teach Russian, but there's little demand for it.

HARPER: A couple of the students who are in the academic programs would like to have maybe a class of it. They mentioned the idea of having a class, but usually there aren't enough students to enroll in it because of the, because of the size of the school for one thing. You know, we're limited in our department what classes we can offer, because of the demands, and also because we're having a shrinking student body.

BLACKTON: So, if enough students demanded Russian, you could teach it, but that doesn't happen yet.

HARPER: No, if enough students demanded it, we could perhaps offer it, but it'll be to the detriment of losing another class in one of the other language areas, be it one French class, or one Spanish class.

BLACKTON: So you have single budget, and that covers everything.

HARPER: That's the way it works. It's pretty hard.

BLACKTON: Maureen Watson has taught French for 11 years, after a stint in the foreign service. She tries to encourage students to take languages even though there's no requirement, because, she says, they might need the knowledge later.

WATSON: Instead of looking at French as an immediate saleable skill once they get out of school, to look on it as a very, a very good adjunct, an additional skill that they can use in other jobs, much as I did when I was in the Foreign Service. I do a great deal of translating work on the outside, you know, in addition to my teaching. And, and simply for the enjoyment of another culture, another country. Everyone, everyone travels now. The world's getting smaller and smaller, and it's amazing the number of students that I have in class who've been to Europe.

BLACKTON: Still, relatively few Los Angeles students take languages -- about 57,000 out of a junior and senior high enrollment of 285,000. Instructional Specialist, Dr. Jules Mandel says there's also a high degree of attrition between the first and second year of instruction.

MANDEL: We must remember that foreign language is an elective. It is not a required subject, at least not for graduation. It is certainly an essential subject for an educated person.

BLACKTON: If you could change things in the district, would you make, in fact, a language requirement?

MANDEL: Assuming that we have excellent staff, or competent staff, I would say yes, we should require a foreign language.

BLACKTON: Instructional Specialist, Dr. Jules Mandel. He thinks a lack of money and a lack of public pressure have reduced the importance of languages in the public schools. He hopes the federal government will take the initiative to coax local schools to develop foreign language programs again.

BLAIR: That report for OPTIONS IN EDUCATION by Bill Blackton in Los Angeles.

MERROW: Maybe the federal government will get involved. Recently, the U.S. Commissioner of Education publicly bemoaned the fact that so few high school graduates speak a foreign language.

BLAIR: Representative Paul Simon of Illinois has been pushing hard to encourage foreign language study.

MERROW: And President Carter has announced plans to create a short-term commission to study the question of how to get more students to learn languages other than English.

BLAIR: Many people think knowing foreign languages is important for jobs, travel, or just for better understanding.

MERROW: Gladys Lipton, a foreign language coordinator in Maryland told David Selvin that studying foreign languages can even raise test scores.

HOW THE STUDY OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES CAN HELP THE EDUCATION PROCESS

LIPTON: There are a number of studies, which I can't give you right off hand, but, for example, there were a number of studies where they had the elementary school foreign language programs. And they tested students in their reading and spelling skills, and arithmetic skills before the experience and after the experience, primarily because people were nervous. They felt, well, if you add a foreign language at an early age, the kids are going to miss out on something. They must be able to use their time completely in reading skills. Well, the results of those studies showed that the students not only held their ground, but showed increases in the language arts skills of reading, spelling, and even arithmetic as well.

SELVIN: I don't know whether you're willing to go this far, but it seems to me that there's a correlation between the dropping of foreign languages in schools, and the dropping of test scores, of reading scores. Is there a correlation?

LIPTON: Yes, there's a correlation. As a matter of fact, something came across my desk the other day from the, the SAT testing people, where they analyze various reports, and they did point to the fact that decline in foreign languages might very well be one of the reasons for the decline in verbal test scores. They found a very close correlation with higher scores with those students who took four or more foreign language courses.

SELVIN: That's a very strong statement, in a sense, because that's a very big issue in schools today. Headline: You say that teaching foreign languages can change our reading skill scores.

LIPTON: It's the SAT people who made a very careful analysis with very prominent people on their panel. And as a matter of fact, page 27 or 28 on their report indicates that one of the possibilities that they really have to pursue and look into is the fact that students had higher verbal scores when they pursued a greater number of courses in foreign languages. Headline: it's news.

MERROW: Gladys Lipton, a coordinator of foreign languages in Maryland, talking with David Selvin.

BLAIR: Maybe studying a language leads to a better job.

STRAUSHEIM: The State Department of Commerce here in Indiana surveyed

Indiana businesses to see, you know, what number of them doing business abroad required language services of one kind or another. And more than half of them did, and more than half of them said, not that they want...especially wanted people who were prepared in languages, but they might give preference to hiring someone who had the skills they needed. And the languages that the Indiana businesses identified, ironically, were Spanish, French, and German. We thought they would be Japanese, Arabic, Portuguese, something of that sort. But ironically they want the commonly taught languages from college and universities.

MERROW: Lorraine Strausheim, President of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, talking with Margaret Joseph of station WFIU, Bloomington, Indiana.

BLAIR: Need another reason?

BROD: We believe that the curriculum ought to be more internationalized than it is in secondary schools, or even in elementary school; that students should be given a better sense of what the world is and how interdependent the United States is with all of its partner nations across the globe. As soon as that happens, then we think that students will recognize and see for themselves, and the need for communication, for deep communication.

BLAIR: Richard Brod of the Modern Language Association says that students have to learn that they're living in an international society. Language breaks down chauvinism, Brod says.

BROD: The myth that you can get everywhere with English is absurd. It's certainly true in countries like Holland, which is obviously...which is close to England, and obviously geared to the study of English at the school and college level for the Dutch. But it isn't true elsewhere, and it isn't true universally, and it isn't true, it isn't enough for deep communication: simply to find, let's say, a Persian who can take your order in a restaurant if you speak English. If you want to really learn something about Iran or India or China or Japan, you've got to acquire some sense of that language and culture. And I think young people see that now, and see that we are not any longer a colonialist, imperialist power that can push our way around the world simply by shouting English at everybody. And I think that is going to be the motivation in the future: genuine communication among nations that we see as our partners, and not as colonies.

BLAIR: Richard Brod of the Modern Language Association, talking with Dan Mack in New York City.

MERROW: But despite brave words about international education, better jobs and higher test scores, the decline in foreign language study is serious. Colleges don't require it for the most part. Only about half the colleges do today, as opposed to nearly 90% a dozen years ago.

BLAIR: And in public schools, there's the budget crunch.

MERROW: Sure, it's time to cut out the "frills" and get back to the "essentials."

BLAIR: That means art, phys ed, music and foreign languages are often on the endangered species list. Juris Jansens reports on the situation in Seattle, Washington.

FOREIGN LANGUAGES: AN ENDANGERED SPECIES IN SEATTLE

JANSENS: A law suit challenging the public schools' heavy reliance on special levies has forced the state legislature to increase state funds for education. But to insure that students across the state benefit equitably from this money, the legislature has had to decide on a definition of basic education. This definition has raised some problems, particularly for those who teach foreign languages. They are concerned that their discipline has been downgraded to being a "frill." Harry Reinhert is President of the Washington Association of Foreign Language Teachers.

REINHERT: The way the bill is worded, it says that the district must offer a minimum 60% basic skills areas, which includes all of the traditional academic areas except foreign language. The district must offer a minimum of 20% in work skills. The district may offer 20% in such things as foreign language and drivers education, provided at least half of those are basic skills or work skills, The Lord giveth, the Lord taketh away. They gave us 20%, took away

17

10% immediately.

But, the "may" is the thing that worries us, because the first time a district gets in financial problems, they're going to cut out that which is not mandated. There is no requirement that any district offer foreign language. There is requirement that they offer all these other things, and that is what really scares us as much as anything else. We have a rough time all the time attracting kids into our classes, and we've done a good job of it. We have had....We have got some fantastically strong programs in this state. Now what the legislature has done is to say, "Even if you go out and sell half your student body on the importance of signing up for your programs, you can have 5% of the student body and that's it." And we think this is grossly unfair.

JANSENS: Harry Reinhert, President of the Washington Association of Foreign Language Teachers. Reinhert and others, including a daily newspaper have brought this issue to the attention of the legislature. What that body does about it will depend partly on the way it resolves a very basic conflict, as explained here by the House Education Committee Chairman, Art Glomady.

GLOMADY: You know, in the best of all worlds, we pay for it all. That's not realistic. When we look at the impact of our dropouts--where they go--they go to those high cost areas to the taxpayer, the corrections; they go to public assistant; they go on our unemployment role. We're paying through the nose for the job we're not doing in basic education. The...unfortunately, the, with limited resources, the legislature has to look at what will most benefit the state, rather than, you know, make sure that everybody gets aplenty.

JANSENS: The Senate Education Committee Chairman takes a more optimistic stance. This is Senator Jim McDermitt.

MCDERMITT: The support that wasn't there originally is now there. And I think the legislature...it's a reactive body. We're representative, and when we sense what people are wanting, then we respond to it. And I don't think people in the legislature were cognizant of the extent to which the people actually do support the teaching of foreign languages.

JANSENS: It is said the primary impact of this legislation will be felt by those districts with extensive language programs, usually the districts oriented more to college prep than vocational courses, and usually those in more urbanized areas. Those districts are in the process of developing their budgets for the coming year, and so far no controversy has surfaced over foreign language program cutbacks.

BLAIR: That report for OPTIONS IN EDUCATION from Juris Jansens of station KUOW, Seattle.

MERROW: So what's the future hold? Foreign language advocates think they know. They think, they hope that the study of foreign languages will pick up soon, as more and more students realize the advantages in jobs, in traveling...

BLAIR: ...and that studying foreign languages is a way of going back to basics: that is, languages help you learn grammar, semantics, word roots, vocabulary.

MERROW: When foreign language advocates say the future looks brighter, they point to several places where students are enrolling again.

BLAIR: The Washington State University in Pullman, Washington, is one of those places.

MERROW: Barbara Hanford reports.

A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGES?

HANFORD: WSU's foreign language enrollment has been increasing since 1970. A land grant university may not sound like the place for internationalism, but if the foreign language enrollment is any indicator, it's certainly got something going for it. The Chairman of Foreign Languages and Literatures at Washington State University, Dr. Jean Charles Senioray, describes the enrollment increase in his department.

SENIORAY: What's happening, really, is that for the last seven years we have grown about 55% in enrollment in foreign languages and literatures, while

the university only went up about 10%. Across the nation there has been declines in foreign language enrollments, and that's what makes our situation somewhat unique, is that we have managed to bag the trend. We are lucky in being primarily a teaching department. We believe teaching is our main function. We believe also in research. We do research, but we stress teaching very much. The first thing we did was to review the curriculum in the various languages, speak to students at all levels -- first year, second year, graduate students. We had many meetings in the various sections of the department to find out if what we were offering was what was needed for the students; we were accomplishing the objectives not only of the departments, but of the students. And I think because of those meetings in particular, we made lots of changes in the curriculum. We added a number of culture classes, a number of advanced language, advanced conversation, advanced grammar. Students wanted to be skilled in the foreign language. While in the past, and still in many universities, after two years of training in a foreign language, you are pretty well forced to take literature classes. And some of these classes are even taught in English, which I completely oppose. So that the students really don't have a chance to continue developing their skills past the second year level.

This, we do not do. This we have changed. And I think that's a factor. I mean, before you can attract students, you have to be sure that what you offer them is what they need.

HANFORD: And what do the students have to say about the foreign language program at WSU? An advanced language student, Jim Meyer, is pleased with his experience.

STUDENT: Freshman and sophomore courses are all pretty much the same: you just learn the basic grammar, and try and build up your vocabulary. But when you get into the advanced level, when you start reading literature and newspapers, and listening to radio programs and things like that, I think the program is beneficial because the faculty allows you room to move. If you want to come in and sign up for special independent study courses, they'll allow you to do that. You can translate pieces of literature, or journalistic pieces that appeal to your own special interests. And they'll, they'll let you do that if you have the sufficient grammar and vocabulary background to do it.

MERROW: That report for OPTIONS IN EDUCATION by Barbara Hanford, station KWSU, Pullman, Washington.

BLAIR: So, what does the future hold? Je ne sais pas du tout.

MERROW: Que sera, sera.

* * *

BLAIR: If you'd like a transcript of this program, "Foreign Languages," it's available for 50¢. Write us at National Public Radio -- Education, Washington, D.C. 20036. The cassette costs $5.00.

MERROW: And if you'd like to know what we'll be doing in the next three months, we have a program guide with our schedule. It's free.

BLAIR: So, if you want a transcript for 50¢, a cassette for $5.00, or a free program guide, write us at National Public Radio -- Education, Washington, D.C. 20036. Ask for Program 111, "Foreign Languages."

MERROW: And we'd like to hear your ideas about what we ought to cover, what you'd like to hear more about.

BLAIR: And when you write us, please tell us the call letters of your local NPR station.

* * *

MERROW: Material for this program came in part from Margaret Joseph, member station WFIU, Bloomington, Indiana; Barbara Hanford, KWSU, Pullman, Washington; Juris Jansens, KUOW, Seattle, Washington; Art Silverman, WVPA, Windsor, Vermont; Liane Hansen, WUHY, Philadelphia; Rachel Kranz, KUOM, St. Paul, Minnesota; and Dan Mack in New York; Bill Blackton in Los Angeles; and David Selvin in Washington, D.C.

* * *

BLAIR: OPTIONS IN EDUCATION is a co-production of National Public Radio and the Institute for Educational Leadership of The George Washington University.

MERROW: Principal support is provided by the National Institute of Education. Additional funds come to us from Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

* * *

BLAIR: This program was written and produced by John Merrow.

MERROW: The Associate Producer is Katharine Ferguson. Assistant Producer, Natalie Iglitz. Technical assistance by Skip Pizzi and Al Freedman.

BLAIR: I'm Wendy Blair.

MERROW: I'm John Merrow.

* * *

MERROW: This is NPR -- National Public Radio.

* * *

MUSIC CREDIT: Musical Treasures of Provincial France, "Lous Esclops (les sabots) (the Wooden Shoes)" Phillips, PH415

Theodore Bikel, Songs of Russia, "Pomnyu Ya (I remember), Elektra Corp, EKS-7185.

Cymbalym Tsibane, Barclay 20195.

* * *